

The chart below illustrates the difference between a subject and a theme:

Subject	Theme
growing up	Growing up means taking responsibility.
nature	Nature can be beautiful but deadly.
love	People sometimes express love through actions, not words.

Always try to connect a story's theme to your own life. Also remember that no two readers will state a theme in exactly the same way.

TWO-COLUMN VOCABULARY

lavishly *adv.:* generously; plentifully. *The table was heaped lavishly with food.*

mortified *v. used as adj.:* ashamed; deeply embarrassed. *Mortified by her family's behavior, she fled to the ladies' room.*

spectacle *n.:* remarkable sight. *The narrator fears that her noisy brother is making a spectacle of himself.*

etiquette *n.:* acceptable manners and behavior. *Slurping is not proper etiquette in a fancy restaurant.*

First Thoughts

1. What scene in this story do you remember most clearly? Why?

Thinking Critically

2. What American customs confuse the Lins when they eat at the Gleasons'? What mistakes do the Gleasons make when they eat at the Lins'?
3. List some of the steps the Lins take to adapt to their new surroundings. Then, make a **prediction** about how they will eventually fit into American life.
4. Meg's comment that "all Americans slurp" hints at the story's **theme**. What do you think that theme is?

Extending Interpretations

5. You may know people who have come to the United States from another country. Does the author make the immigrant experience sound too easy, or is she on target? Did the story remind you of your own experiences in a new situation?
6. Did Namioka's story make you see any of your own customs in a new light? Do you think some of your family's or culture's customs might seem odd or confusing to an outsider? Explain.